(b) whether it is also a fact that the C.C.E.A., has also decided to allow private sector to set up coal washeries?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COAL WITH ADDITIONAL CHARGE OF THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF LABOUR (SHRI P. A. SANGMA): (a) and (b) The Government have decided to allow private sector participation in coal mining operations in virgin areas for the purpose of captive consumption for power generation and other end uses to be notified, as well as to set up coal washeries.

A Bill to amend the Coal Mines (Nationalisation) Act, 1973 in order to implement the above decision of the Government is introduced in Parliament.

*130. [*Transferred to the 28th July, 1992*].

SAARC Trade Pact

*131. DR. SANJAYA SINH: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news-item which appeared in the 'Times of India', dated June 26, 1992, captioned "Move for SAARC Trade Pact runs into trouble" to the effect that exercise to liberalise trade between members of the SAARC has run into a rough patch;

(b) if so, what are the details in this regard; and

(c) what is the reaction of Government in the matter?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI R. L. BHATIA): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) At the Committee on Economic Cooperation (CEC) held in Colombo during June 22-23, there were some initial differences on the validity of a prior recommendation by an Inter Governmental Group (IGG) to set up a SAARC Preferential Trading Arrangement (SAPTA) in three years. These were ironed out with an understanding to regard the three year period as indicative in nature, aimed at expediting the process of economic cooperation among the member States. Both the IGG and CEC reports were approved by the SAARC Council of Ministers at their meeting in Colombo on 8-9 July, 1992. The IGG will hold its next meeting early to draft an agreement on a Preferencial Trade Arrangements in the SAARC Region.

Postponement of talks for Asiasat Transponder

*132. SHRI MURLIDHAR CHANDRAKANT BHANDARE:
SHRI RAJUBHAI A. PARMAR:

Will the Minister of INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that talks with the Hongkong firm, Hutchinson Whampoa, for leasing a transponder on Asiasat I satellite scheduled to be held in May this year, were indefinitely postponed at a short notice;

(b) if so, under what circumstances and whether Government sees Pakistan's hand behind the postponement as reported in the 'Hindustan Times' dated 28th May, 1992; and

(c) what steps are being taken by Government to secure the transponder facility?

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (KUMARI GIRIJA VYAS): (a) to (c) The proposed visit of a delegation to Hong Kong in May, 1992 to explore the possibility of obtaining a transponder on